Walking the Freedom Trail

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Walking the Freedom Trail

by Casey_Wolfe

Summary

Hannibal and Will are hunting for a way into the Institute in hopes that they will find Abigail. To do that, they need the help of the Railroad- enemies of the Institute, determined to save the sentient robots known as synths.

Notes

So I managed to thread the few other ideas I had together in regards to this AU. Again, you don't have to have played the Fallout games but it certainly allows you to perhaps appreciate more- plus you'll be able to catch the little tidbits as relates to Fallout 4. Speaking of, there are minor spoilers for the main quest if you haven't gotten to the Institute yet.

See the end of the work for more notes

“You’re sure about this?” Will questioned again.

Hannibal let out a little breath, which Will was quickly learning was a sigh for the likes of him. Hannibal was a man of grand words and subtle expression.

“I just don’t wanna find out this *friend* of yours was lying. I mean, teleportation?”

“Is it any more fantastical than what you’ve already seen?” Hannibal inquired. “You were cryogenically frozen,” he reminded. “You have seen the synths they possess. There’s-”

“Alright, alright.” Will held his hands up. “I get it.”

Will couldn’t deny the things he’d seen since traveling the wasteland- especially after Hannibal joined his quest. The synths they had encountered while poking around outside Goodneighbor were built like humans, able to use weapons even. Sure, they had military robots pre-war, but nothing like these. According to Hannibal, they were only the old Gen 1’s and Gen 2’s. The Gen 3’s were the ones everyone feared, the ones so human-like that no one could tell the difference between them, and flesh and bone humans.

He couldn’t imagine it. The pre-war robots he was familiar with were vastly different. They had survived the bombs or were salvaged and rebuilt, both of the domestic variety and the military ones. Will wasn’t sure how to react to the knowledge robots could look and act so human.

That was what- who?- they were hunting now. Coursers, Hannibal said they were called. They were Gen 3’s, highly advanced and trained for combat. Their job was to hunt down rogue synths that escaped the confines of the Institute into the Commonwealth. Protecting Institute interests- whatever those were- was their primary purpose.

Apparently finding and killing a Courser was necessary to getting on the inside. There was a lot of talk about taking the thing’s- person’s?- *chip*, which would give them the data they needed to use their *teleporter*. How was this really his life?

Will had naturally asked how Hannibal knew so much about the Institute when it seemed no one else did. Hannibal had given him one of those barely there smiles and cryptically answered, “*Associates that have made it their mission to find the Institute and rescue the synths.”*

Will was still getting used to the idea of such advanced robots without thinking of ones that had such a thing as *free will*.

“Look,” Hannibal implored.

“Did that…?” Will’s jaw fell open, having seen a shock of blue light- which sounded like a zap of electricity through the air- and what looked to be a man in uniform appearing.

“That is our Courser,” Hannibal said, already up and grabbing his weapons to make for the door.

They had been camping out on the roof of the old C.I.T. building, the origins of the Institute. Their members had supposedly gone underground when the bombs fell. Now they were simply lost to the world, living who knew where, with obvious plans for the wasteland around them.

"That's a robot?" Will asked, hurrying after him. "Are you sure? He looks-"

"Human. Yes. I told you that in fact."

Will huffed, looking at the Pip Boy on his arm. The personal computer given standard to all Vault residents was certainly handy. At the moment it was allowing them to tune into the frequency the Courser was using in order to track him.

"This won't be easy," Hannibal reminded as they made their way down the stairs. "Stay back if you can and cover me."

Will nodded even though the man couldn't see. He had been surprised to find that Hannibal was an excellent fighter, great with his hands and blades in equal measure. Where stealth served him best, he also had learned to handle a gun. Not that Will was a slouch, given he was an ex-cop. Apparently being frozen for 200 years hadn't done anything to his aim either.

"I'm serious Will." Hannibal stopped suddenly at the bottom of the stairwell, whirling around. They were face to face, sharing the same breath. "Don't underestimate this thing. And *don't* put yourself in harm's way."

Will swallowed, somehow managing to nod. "Alright," he whispered. That wouldn't stop him from protecting Hannibal should it come to that, but he didn't think it needed to be said. Besides, Hannibal would only disagree.

"Good." They stayed where they were a few moments longer before Hannibal's lips twitched up subtly. Then he did something even Will- who was extremely good at reading people given his unique *gifts*- didn't see coming.

Hannibal kissed him.

It was chaste but a kiss nonetheless.

"Follow me," Hannibal encouraged, turning and heading for the door as though nothing had happened.

* * *

"You're sure this is the place?" Will asked, looking around the half-collapsed church.

Hannibal pointed out the white painted symbol on a fallen beam- a glowing lantern. "They're here." He slipped through a door, Will on his heels, heading into the catacombs below. "Their previous headquarters was overrun by synths. But this is where Bedelia says they've gone."

"Ah yes." Will didn't bother to hide his dislike. "The brilliant Doctor Du Maurier."

“Careful Will,” Hannibal replied in amusement, “your jealousy is showing.”

“She practically threw herself at you Hannibal,” he pointed out. “Forgive me for not appreciating it.”

They had visited the woman in Goodneighbor, a rather seedy town quite different to Diamond City. The place had been called the Memory Den, old virtual reality simulators apparently allowing to dig into the mind to relive memories. In truth it was a front for the Railroad.

A group of people who had dedicated their lives to freeing the synths of the Institute, the Railroad worked to get the Gen 3’s out of the Commonwealth. Part of that process included erasing their memories and giving them new ones. That was apparently Bedelia’s job.

“She’s harmless,” Hannibal assured. “Besides,” he paused, a heated look in his eyes as he gazed at Will, “she could never be you my dear Will.”

Blushing fiercely, Will muttered, “Focus,” continuing through the catacombs lit only by the light of his Pip Boy.

“I intend to,” Hannibal replied smugly, “once I can get you somewhere alone.”

Will was just glad he was walking in front of him so Hannibal didn’t see the deepening blush on his cheeks.

* * *

After almost being shot on sight, Will found himself in a chamber of the catacombs long forgotten. It was the current headquarters of the Railroad, chased out of their previous home by the relentless pursuit of the Institute.

As Hannibal talked in harsh whispers with the woman who seemed to be their leader, Will looked around to find a young man staring at him. The man was leaning casually against a crumbling brick pillar, lips turning into a smirk as he tipped his head to indicate Will should join him. Will glanced back at Hannibal before following into the shadows of an alcove.

“Matthew Brown,” the man introduced. “Well,” he added with a smirk, “*Hawk*. Everyone operates on code names here. Helps keep us safe. Figured since I know your name though…”

Will nodded. He realized that Matt had been one of those that had confronted them at the entrance. Hannibal and the leader clearly knew each other- he had called her Rose- but she had demanded to know Will’s identity before allowing them inside.

“That’s Doctor Alana Bloom,” Matt continued, indicating the *Rose* that Hannibal was speaking to- clearly an appropriate code name. “Thorn is her wife, Margot Verger.”

“Verger? As in *thee* Verger’s?” They had been a prominent family back before the war. Clearly they had survived the bombs dropping, most likely in a private bunker if Will was to guess. He couldn’t imagine a family like the *Verger’s* in a Vault.

“Heard of ‘em I see. Yeah, the rich bastards living in that big ass house guarded by sentry bots? Shame really. But then Margot’s nothin’ like ‘em.”

Matt had taken to introducing more people milling about, though only by their code names. Will didn’t figure it had anything to do with not knowing their actual ones, given all of the other things he was being told. “How do you know all this stuff?” Will interrupted at one point.

Matt grinned. “It’s my job. Observe and report.”

“So you’re a spy.”

“I prefer infiltrator, but yeah, that works. I’m naturally predisposed to it. Might as well put it to good use.” At Will’s questioning look he explained, “I’m a synth.”

“What?!” Will looked him over quickly from head to toe. “But you look…”

“Normal?” Matt’s grin grew. “I know. All Gen 3’s do.”

Will nodded slowly. He couldn’t argue given after Hannibal broke that Courser’s neck, Will was allowed a closer look. There was nothing to Will that told him the Courser was a robot- not until Hannibal cracked him open to reveal all the circuitry inside that was.

“It’s not just in looks though,” Matt explained, leaning a shoulder against the wall. “I think just like any human does. I have desires, fears. And now I’m free. So I chose to help out the other synths that want to be free too.”

Will had to wonder if the only thing really separating them was the working parts on the inside. It was easy to think of synths as just machines, especially when they were trying to kill him. Meeting Matthew though tilted all that on it’s head. He understood why the likes of Alana would want to help them now.

All sentient beings deserved to be free.

“Will?” Hannibal was standing next to the alcove. There was no missing the glare he sent Matt’s way before looking at Will. “Let’s go.”

“But-”

“Now.”

Will frowned, saying a quick goodbye to Matt before following Hannibal out a back entrance that dumped them by the river.

“What’s going on?” Will asked. “Are they gonna help us?”

“Yes. For a price, of course.” Hannibal pursed his lips.

“What price?”

“Nothing for you to worry about.”

Will’s brows lowered. “Then why’d you drag me out here? Shouldn’t we be in there going over the plan?”

“It’s been arranged.” Hannibal stubbornly refused to look at him. “And I refuse to stay in that hovel any longer than necessary. Especially when *Hawk* is there.”

“Ahhh.” Will couldn’t quite hide his amusement. He stood on his toes to speak into Hannibal’s ear. “Who’s the jealous one now?”

He walked away laughing, practically feeling the glare on his back.

Will was baiting him- baiting a dark creature if what he read of Hannibal was right- but couldn’t find it in himself to care. He’d been alone in this world far too long, well before the bombs fell and the world became ruin. Now that he finally found someone as broken and twisted as himself, Will wasn’t about to let go.

/End

End Notes

Part 3 to come soon. Until then.

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